

Other Viewpoints

Amendments deserve approval

State constitutions are something like basements. Every now and again they require some housekeeping.

An old provision in the Kansas Constitution, for example, technically limits gun ownership to militias. Another provision enables the state to deny voting rights to people with mental illnesses. The Kansas Legislature wants voters to clean up the language in both those instances, and correctly so....

Here are The Star's recommendations for some of the lesser-known issues that will confront voters on Nov. 2.

Kansas Amendment 1: In 1905, the Kansas Supreme Court interpreted the state constitution's right to bear arms to be a collective right. If enforced, this would essentially empower militias to arm, but would deny, for instance, hunters' constitutional protection for gun ownership.

In November, voters are being asked to fix this imbalance. The proposition changes the wording from "The People" to "A person," who can bear arms "for the defense of self, family, home and state, for lawful hunting and recreational use, and for any other lawful purpose."

That language is a close echo to recent rulings by the U.S. Supreme Court, which has noted "the Second Amendment protects a personal right to keep and bear arms for lawful purposes, most notably for self-defense within the home."

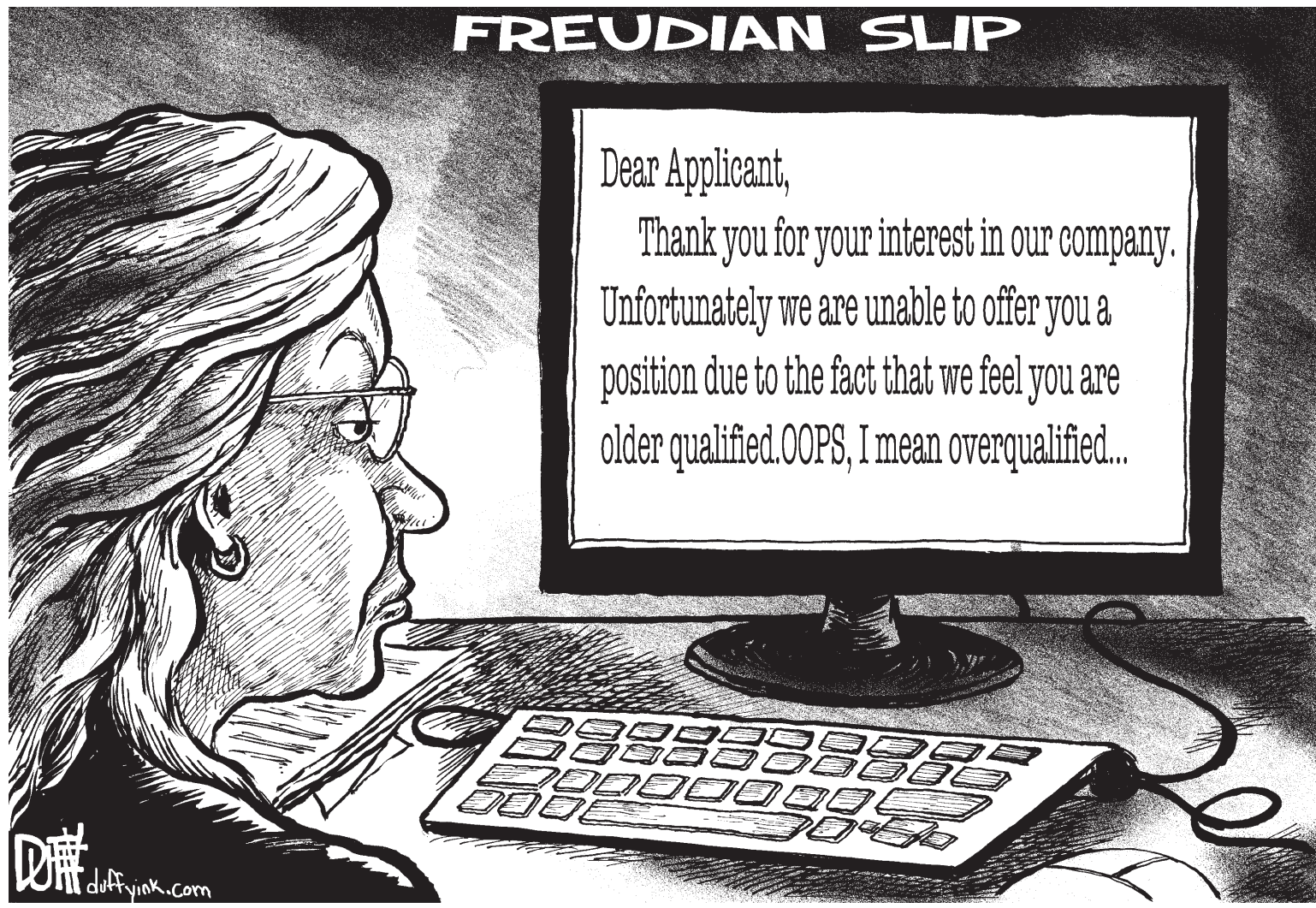
While the amendment in a practical sense doesn't change anything, it's worth getting in line with federal law. We urge a yes vote on Amendment 1.

Kansas Amendment 2: Back in 1973, when Kansas reworked its constitution, lawmakers slipped the phrase "mental illness" into a law empowering the state to "exclude persons from voting because of mental illness or commitment to a jail or penal institution."

Mental health advocates want that phrase stripped from the constitution, and for good reason. The idea of mental illness covers a lot of ground. Using different definitions, anywhere from one-third to one-sixth of all Americans qualify. Potentially, that's a lot of folks banned from the ballot box. And there's no evidence someone with a mental illness is incapable of making a rational decision at the polls.

Similar to Amendment 1, the legislature has never moved to lock the mentally ill from voting booths. Still, that language in the constitution creates an unfair stigma for those dealing with mental illness. The wording should be changed. Vote yes on Amendment 2. ...

- The Kansas City Star, via The Associated Press



Sneaky zucchini plant was hiding out

"I've been lying to people," she shouted. Huh?

I should have known. I was speculating on what felonies she's been accusing me of when she waved me over to the garden.

"Look," she said, smiling. "This is *not* a yellow squash."

In fact, I had noticed that plant when I was picking squash earlier in the day. Its leaves were a little darker, a little rougher, than the surrounding yellow squash.

It's been an unusual harvest this year: usually the yellow squash dies off and the zucchini just grows and grows, producing mounds of long, green fruit.

Usually, we plant two or three hills of each type and the bugs get a couple of them. Usually, they get the yellow squash.

Not this year. Cynthia mixed up the seeds and planned rows of plants all mixed together. Squash plants came up everywhere, and for a while, we harvested both types.

We like that because having both means you can make more colorful dishes. They taste about the same, the texture is similar, but the color helps dress up the plate.



Steve Haynes

• Along the Sappa

At first, the two seemed about equally productive. We picked several small, firm zucchini and some cute little crook-necked yellows. Cynthia sliced them and made saute and me-lange and stir fry. Life was good.

Then the zucchini started to die off. Production all but ceased. She had to borrow zucchini to make her annual summer quota of bread for the sons-in-law. They both love her zucchini bread; it's one of the recipes she uses to cement her status as a good, if slightly daffy, mother-in-law.

They got green squash in their zucchini bread. Green squash and real sugar. Not me. I got yellow squash and fake sweetener. The bread was great, so I'm not complaining, but you do notice the yellow "zucchini" in the

loaf. It tastes the same; it just looks wrong.

But imagine the embarrassment for a veteran gardener, 40 years' experience, in having to beg for zucchini. Most people have to leave the stuff in unlocked cars.

And now she'll have to admit that she wasn't exactly telling the truth. Her zucchini plants, it seems, did not all die. One apparently was only on hiatus. It's back now. In the cool of September, it's blooming and one little zucchini clings to a flower. In two or three days, it'll be ready to pick. In four or five, it'll be a dark green war club.

My, you have to watch those things.

So, just when we'd settled down to borrowed zucchini, yellow rind in the squash bread and monochrome mixtures, we've got to learn to deal with green squash again.

It shouldn't be too bad.

One little plant can't produce too much squash. Can it?

Steve Haynes is editor and publisher of The Colby Free Press and president of Nor'West Newspapers. In his spare time, whenever that is, he like to ride and watch trains.

Where to write, call

- U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts**, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774
- U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback**, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521
- U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran**, 2202 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715
- State Rep. Jim Morrison**, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St. Room 274-W, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7676 e-mail: jmorrison@ink.org

COLBY FREE PRESS

155 W. Fifth St. (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963 Colby, Kan. 67701 fax (785) 462-7749

Send news to: colby.editor @ nwkansan.com

State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout, Columns, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography. Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

Steve Haynes - Publisher
s.haynes @ nwkansan.com

NEWS

Kevin Bottrell - News Editor
kbottrell @ nwkansan.com

Andy Heintz - Sports Reporter
aheintz @ nwkansan.com

Marian Ballard - Copy Editor
mballard @ nwkansan.com

Vera Sloan - Society Editor
colby.society @ nwkansan.com

ADVERTISING

Heather Woolfter - Advertising Representative
hwoolfter @ nwkansan.com

Andrea Bowers - Advertising Representative
abowers @ nwkansan.com

Kathryn Ballard - Advertising Representative
kballard @ nwkansan.com

Kylee Hunter - Graphic Design
khunter @ nwkansan.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Robin Tubbs - Office Manager
rtubbs @ nwkansan.com

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator
support @ nwkansan.com

NOR'WEST PRESS

Richard Westfahl - General Manager
Lana Westfahl, Jim Jackson, Betty Morris, Jim Bowker, Judy McKnight, Kris McCool

THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the days observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Nor'West Newspaper, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news herein. Member Kansas Press Association and National Newspaper Association.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In Colby, Thomas County and Oakley: three months \$35, one year \$85. By mail to ZIP Codes beginning with 676 and 677: three months \$39, one year \$95. Elsewhere in the U.S., mailed once per week: three months \$39, one year \$95. Student rate, nine months, in Colby, Thomas County and Oakley, \$64; mailed once per week elsewhere in the U.S. \$72

Paying for government takes longer

The shrinking number of us lucky enough to be earning paychecks finally started working for ourselves - Aug. 19, to be precise. Until then, we were working for local, state and federal governments.

That sad fact comes courtesy of the Americans for Tax Reform Foundation, a Washington-based tax watchdog organization, and its Center for Fiscal Accountability. They just came out with their annual "Cost of Government Day" report, which calculates the day on which the average American has paid off his or her share of the costs of government spending and regulations.

This year, that date came a full eight days later than last year - the latest Cost of Government Day ever recorded.

"The fact that Cost of Government Day falls in the later part of August is alarming enough," said the group's president, Grover Norquist. "It is even more harrowing that the 2010 Cost of Government Day constitutes a 34-day jump from just two short years ago, when it fell on July 16. This illustrates the ballooning growth of government, and should be a serious concern to taxpayers who are footing the ever-expanding bill."

Americans for Tax Reform is not the only organization calculating how much of our lives are spent working to cover the costs of government.

The Tax Foundation, a private, nonpartisan tax education and research organization in

Other Opinions

• **Steve Stanek**
Heartland Institute

Washington, issues an annual Tax Freedom Day report, which calculates how long Americans must work to earn enough money to pay local, state, and federal taxes. This year we had to work until April 9, one day later than in 2009, but more than two weeks earlier than in 2007.

"The shift toward a lower tax burden since 2007," the Tax Foundation writes, "has been driven by three factors:

- "The recession has reduced tax collections even faster than it has reduced income.
- "President Obama and the Congress have enacted large but temporary income tax cuts for 2009 and 2010, just as President Bush did in 2008.
- "Two significant taxes were repealed for 2010 as part of previous legislation, the estate tax and the so-called PEP and Pease provisions of the income tax.

"Despite all these tax reductions, Americans will pay more taxes in 2010 than they will spend on food, clothing and shelter com-

bined."

The burden is likely to climb as state and local governments impose tax and fee hikes to cover budget deficits, Bush-era tax cuts expire at the end of this year and the ObamaCare tax increases kick in.

The Competitive Enterprise Institute, also in Washington, looks at regulatory costs in its annual 10,000 Commandments report. This year's report, issued in April, noted regulations cost more than \$1.2 trillion in 2009 - far more than the \$900 billion Americans paid in federal income taxes. The report noted federal regulations grow each year and now cover an astonishing 157,000 pages. State and local governments pile on additional pounds of regulations.

Cost of Government Day combines the total costs of government spending and regulations and arrives at Aug. 19 as the date when we who live in the land of the free become free of government. By this measure, medieval serfs were more free than we are.

Steve Stanek (sstanek@heartland.org) is a research fellow at the Heartland Institute in Chicago.

We encourage comments on opinions expressed on this page. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701, or e-mail colby.editor @ nwkansan.com.

Mallard Fillmore

• **Bruce Tinsley**

